1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
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793 Cabecar he visited us twice, and on neither occasion did he speak, except when spoken to, unless it was to make some remark, in very few words, and in a low tone of voice, to some of his attendants. His dress consisted of a white shirt, not over clean, a woven cotton breech-cloth, a bright-red handkerchief, tied in a roll around his head, and a magnificent necklace [126] of four strands of large tiger's teeth. He sold me two of the strings for half-a-dollar, and I presented him with some trifles, among which was the rather suggestive article, a bar of soap. He accepted them without any acknowledgment. But then they don't know how to say, "thank you."

767 793 Next in importance are the *Tsu'-gurs*. These are the ordinary priests, and their duties are confined to officiating at the feast for the dead. Like the preceding, they are hereditary; only members of one or two families can become priests, and these seem to have all descended from a common ancestor. I have already described the performances of the *Tsu'-gur* at the death-feast of Santiago, and there is nothing to add in that connection. Other feasts only differ in the less degree of profusion and the shorter time they occupy. But there is one circumstance of which I have said little, and that has always seemed to me mysterious. Unfortunately, from no want of effort on my part, I was not successful in investigating this more thoroughly. The songs of these priests are in a language, dialect, 798 or jargon, whichever it may be called, in great part unintelligible to the uninitiated. Some words used are in the vernacular, but many of the nouns are peculiar. *Si-bu*, or God, has at least twenty names; many natural objects have names peculiar to the priests, and the difference is so great that not only I, with my imperfect knowledge of the language, but Mr. Lyon, who speaks it as well as an Indian, could not understand even the purport of the songs. These songs are taught by rote to the young candidates to the priesthood, and are always rehearsed by the priests apart, before being sung. I made several efforts to obtain a vocabulary, but in each case was defeated, rather by the want of understanding on the part of the priest, than from any unwillingness to impart what they knew. At last I made an agreement with the most intelligent and best informed of them. He was to visit me at a certain time and answer all my questions —for a consideration. But a severe attack of rheumatism prevented his coming and lost me the last chance. I have no theory to offer as to the origin of this singular fact. But two explanations however, seem possible. Either the whole thing is an invention, which I think hardly probable, or the system is an exotic, and the songs are in the original language of the missionary who introduced it. I can hardly express my regret at failing to obtain some clue to so interesting a problem.

756 791 Finally come the *Awas*, sorcerers, or doctors. This is an open profession, and since it requires but little preparation, gives certain privileges and standing, and brings occasional emoluments, it is pretty numerously filled. The fellows are an arrant set of quacks, and I do not believe there is a single one who acts in good faith. Nevertheless, the people as a rule

always confined to funeral ceremonies where they chanted the deeds and merits of the deceased as well as sped the soul along on its journey to the other world through song. The Bribri Singers came from the *stsukur* or *stu'gur* clan according to Gabb and Pittier,[105] but the elders and medicine men in 1956 claimed that they belonged to the *sibəwak*, *korrebué*, or *sinąbwak* groups. Gabb states that their office was hereditary,[106] and that they were next to the *usegLə* in importance. Pittier suggests heredity [107] and notes that they lived only by the lower Coen and had a number of assistants the highest of whom were called *ko*, and apprentices known as *sini*.[108] He adds that elaborate preparation was necessary before the title of Singer was won. This is not exactly in keeping with the idea that their position was hereditary.

Cabécar Singers had to come from the following clans: *kibegrəwák*, *sibəwak*, *bLerəwak*, and *sənitsəwa* (*see* The Clans and Myths: *Protectors of Clans*). Their name in this language is *səgLə*.

Gabb,[109] speaking only about the Bribri, calls attention to the fact that the songs of *stsukur* were in a language which neither he nor the uninitiated could understand. As Lehmann has pointed out, however, the Bribri Singers were in reality a Cabécar group,[110] according to his spelling and that of Pittier, the *korrbué*. We use *korrèbué* because this is the pronunciation given by the Bribri today. There is, nevertheless, another angle to this problem, particularly if one accepts the statement that the Bribri Singers could come from one of the three clans mentioned above. This is the use of a "sacred language" by the medicine men of both Talamancan peoples when singing and the adoption of foreign songs even by the laymen. These aspects will be discussed later under Curing and Songs, respectively.

The Pacific Bribri and Cabécares, in lieu of Singers, have a ceremony called *setéhəwək* in Bribri which is carried out by the medicine man when someone dies (*see* First Burial).

[105] Gabb, 1875, p. 508; Pittier, 1938, p. 17.
[106] Gabb, 1875.
[107] Pittier, 1895, p. 18.
[108] Pittier, 1938, pp. 17–18. Could there be a connec-

6:Stone E-5 (1956-1959)1962
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756 man. It is a question of attaching oneself to a recognized curer who is willing to teach and adhering to a strict training. Among the Cabécar, an aspirant must belong to one of the [614] following clans: túgwa, bLɛriwa, sibawa, sənɟtswa, ɟɔɟəwa, múnúLiwa, kibegruwák.

The most respected medicine men are Cabécares and live in San José Cabécar which serves in a sense as the "university center." The combination of theology with medicine makes this important as the Cabécares have maintained the religious superiority of the Talamancans. In addition to curing, all lore must be part of a good professional's knowledge. He must know the songs and "histories" which tell of the creation, of ancient culture heroes, common folk tales, as well as sacred [198] songs with words in an ancient or secret [778] language unknown to the general public. These last are akin to prayers and are sung to the sacred stones (*see* Special Paraphernalia and Significance) to see if a patient will live or die. In reality, to be a good doctor means to combine the role of a counselor, a fixer, a priest, a prophet, and a curer of people.

Bribri medicine men on the whole lack the respect and, according to popular belief, the know-how that is accredited to the Cabécares. Therefore, it is not unusual to find Bribri [754] medicine men who take recourse to witchcraft and black magic. This is one of the reasons why the Borucas and Térrabas prefer a Cabécar medicine man.

Medicine men are paid only when they cure. The recompense from their own people is a pig, cow, or agricultural produce. Occasionally in Salitre and Cabagra, and often when the medicine man travels amongst the Boruca and [436] the Térraba, he is paid with money. Non-Indians always pay in cash.

756 778 776 **Special Paraphernalia and Significance.** Talamancan religion begins with the great God known as *sibu*. He is the creator of all things and is behind all happenings. One of the most important symbols of *sibu* is the staff of the medicine man. According to the Bribri and the

[144] Aguilar P., 1953.
[145] Skinner, 1920. The staff pictured here is the property of don Otón Jiménez Luthmer of San José.

6:Stone E-5 (1956-1959)1962
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*539 At night, they were given a large jug for a bed.

One of the prisoners noticed that the head of the house would go out to hunt but as soon as he left, the roar of a jaguar was heard. He spied on the man and discovered that outside of the house he was a jaguar but, by shaking himself, his hide fell off and he became a man who went into the forest.

The watching prisoner crept up to the jaguar skin and carried it off. When the man returned and did not find his jaguar skin, he became furious and began to eat the people.

One old woman, seeing the awful things that were happening, heated an earthen rod and stuck it in the mouth of the man-jaguar while he slept. Then she quickly hid in a little tunnel she had prepared beforehand. This is how the people in Alta Talamanca were rid of such a terrible scourge.

The Medicine Man's Stones

(Cabécar and Bribri)

*539 When *sibu* made the first eight medicine men, he died for four days. Three of these men 756 predicted that he would not stay dead but 778 would go to the sky. One of these was *díkúswa* who was once a water bird and when he said that *sibu* would never die he was made into the most powerful of the *sią́* or medicine man's three principal stones. All medicine men know [763] when they themselves are going to die as *díkúswa* disappears or divides himself in half. He is so powerful that only the most powerful doctors dare to use *díkúswa*. The majority rely on *sorkuswa*. All the *sią́*, however, communicate with *sibu* and the medicine men in a • [198] "sacred" or private language unknown to the layman.

(15) The Sacred Stones[195]

(Cabécar and Bribri)

There is a spot in Talamanca where there are large boulders. Here live the *sią́*, the medicine men's stones. A new medicine man, if it is possible, goes there and leaves grains of white maize on the rocks at night. The next morning the stones appear.

[195] *See* Linguistic Texts: *sią́*.

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476 574 273 [184] [534] common and the accordions, guitars, and the round drum or *caja* take the place of the aboriginal upright drum (*see* The Dance). The guests, who wear their best clothing (*see* Adornment), repay their host by giving their labor free until the project is completed. These affairs are noted for the excessive drinking. [578] Few if any fights occur, however, and the over-intoxicated as a rule simply fall asleep guarded by his female companions or vice-versa, and the joint work of the men begins as usual the following day lasting until noon.

THE ARTS

The

533 535 [534] majority of the dances and music consist of the Chiricano *son*, *punta*, and the waltz. The accompaniment is formed by an accordion, guitar, or violin and the round drum.

535 Dances. There are many different dances, both in connection with ceremonies and for sheer pleasure. The Bribri in particular have the greatest number of secular dances which [476] are performed at gatherings called *juntas* usually held to build a house, fell a clearing, or some such joint labor where friends come in to help. Many of the songs that accompany the dances are in a language not understandable [198] to the singers. Some are sung in Térraba. There are two traditional dance methods: in a line or in a circle. The circle type is called *buLik-Lak*. If drums accompany the performers, they remain outside of the ring. Arms are raised horizontally and interlocked. The first movement consists of one step to the right side and a short one to the left with the body inclined slightly forward. The second movement starts in a similar fashion but the beat changes and the two steps are more marked, the second ending in a small jump or hop. Suddenly, the dancers go in the opposite direction and continue with the second movement only. The sideward hop necessarily makes the circle go forward and backward. In the *surbon*, a circle dance, the ring is formed first by men and then women put their heads between the arms of the men and all participate.

There are a number of line dances, for

[***] Gabb, 1875, p. 517.

dance which was performed in a circle by men and women with one person singing but the whole group joining in the chorus. The song recounted the experiences during a hunt.

There are various dances held in connection with death and burial but they are seldom seen today outside of upper Talamanca.

Pittier[208] mentions a bone dance performed at the time of secondary burial by men if the deceased was an adult and by women if a child. The bone dance witnessed by the writer was carried out by a line of women and one of men. The person taking the place of the Singer (*see* Death) chanted the life history of the departed, and kept time with a gourd rattle. His four assistants in the line of men had drums under their arms which they beat as they danced.

A different bone dance which is a remnant of a war dance with trophy heads is occasionally performed when the medicine man is feeling particularly sure of himself and wants to celebrate. Men and women form a circle with interlocked arms. It is said that skulls were once balanced on the arms. Today, nothing is placed there. The men sing and the women join in the chorus singing *ékéké* meaning "good" or "well."

Songs. All sacred songs are basically Cabécar even though they may be sung in Bribri. The Medicine Man and sometimes the Burier sing these songs which are usually in ancient Cabécar and are not understood by the masses.

Lay songs are common to the Bribri and very rare among the Cabécar. The Bribri delight in inventing songs to fit the occasion. Both men and women like to sing and do so on the slightest provocation when working, bathing, washing, or minding the baby. The addition of words only for their sound is characteristic. Likewise, many Térraba words are found in Bribri songs, the meaning of which is unknown to the singer. In fact, the sung language permits all sorts of liberties as well as having a certain vocabulary of its own.

western Panama. The traditional home of the Bribri is in northwest Panama. *See* Stone, 1952, p. 252.

[208] Segarra y Julia, 1907, pp. 594–95.

[209] Pittier, 1938, pp. 25–26.

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Attention has been called to the studies of Lehmann and Pittier (*see* Language) on the Bribri language and Lehmann on Cabécar although vocabularies have been collected by others including Gabb. The most common phonemes which we have been able to discern in Bribri are: a, ą, ɛ́, é, ɛ, ɛ́, ə, i, í, o, u, ú, ų, k, L, bL, tL, t, ts. Adjectives are made by morphemes while many verbs seem to be derived from a noun or an adjective and a verb. There are 42 common morphemes among which we cite: au, bá, dí, do, du, ea, ie, iɛ́, ka, kə, ká, ki, kį, kú, Li, ŋɛ, me, mu, ta, tą, tá, te, té, tə, sa, se, si, su, uk, ųk, še.

In Cabécar, possessive pronouns are generally prefixes and prepositions are suffixes. The prefix *ŋa-* is employed to change verbs to nouns. There is less use of the stop and almost none of aspirants or barely audible sounds which are characteristic of Bribri. The Cabécar language has recently been studied by Aziel and Marian Jones. The report appears in the second volume of the "Proceedings of the 33rd International Congress of Americanists."[224]

They find that in the language heard in Chirripó there are 31 segmental phonemes, 20 consonants, and 11 vowels. The following is taken from their report:

> The syllable in Chirripó is the unit of tone placement.... The word in Chirripó may consist of a single syllable of any of the syllable types, or it may contain as many as 5 syllables in about 40 different combinations of syllable types.... Within the word all single vowels may occur initial (except į, ɛ, ǫ), medial and final. There are 13 vowel clusters which always have either i or u as one of the segments. It must be remembered that these clusters each constitute two syllables since by definition the syllable may contain but one vowel. There are no clusters of three. Vowel clusters generally occur word-final but may occur word-medial. The only example of a word-initial cluster is the word *ia'mi* where the morpheme i — *his* is prefixed to a'mi *mother*. Eight of the vowel clusters contain i as one segment, four contain u, and one contains both u and i. The specific distribution is as follows: of the group containing i (ie, ei, ia, ią, ąi, ai, oi, io) all occur final and ia and oi may also occur medial; of the group containing u (ue, eu, ua, ųą) all occur medial except ua, and all occur final except eu; the cluster ui occurs only final. All of the vowel clusters are of relatively infrequent occurrence in comparison with the single vowels.

Bribri and Cabécar make frequent use of prefixes and suffixes. The double negative is common. Both languages have considerable nasalization and a tendency to use words, even though they be meaningless in the text, only for sound. Likewise, a syllable or letter of a word often is incorporated in another and stands for the complete word or term. A great part of the vocabulary employed by the medicine man in recounting myths is unintelligible to the layman. Songs also generally have terms distinct from those used in conversation, especially the sacred or curing chants of the *jawá*. It is usual for Bribri songs to contain ancient Térraba (Tiribí), which is not understandable to the present day populace.

[224] Jones, 1959.